

REMARKS

The present application was filed on September 8, 2003 with claims 1-17, all of which remain pending. Claims 1 and 14 are the originally-filed independent claims. The present application claims priority to United Kingdom and European applications filed December 24, 2002 and March 31, 2003, respectively.

Claims 7, 8 and 15-17 are objected to due to various informalities.

Claims 1 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Claims 1-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,619,554 (hereinafter “Hogan”).

In this response, Applicants traverse the §102(b) rejection, amend the specification and claims, and add a new independent claim. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the amendments above and the remarks to follow.

With regard to the claim objections and the §112 rejection, Applicants have amended the claims in a manner which is believed to address these issues. It is respectfully submitted that these amendments constitute minor clarifying amendments, and do not narrow the scope of the claims in any way.

With regard to the §102(b) rejection, Applicants initially note that the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), Eighth Edition, August 2001, §2131, specifies that a given claim is anticipated “only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference,” citing Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). Moreover, MPEP §2131 further indicates that the cited reference must show the “identical invention . . . in as complete detail as is contained in the . . . claim,” citing Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co., 868 F.2d 1226, 1236, 9 USPQ2d 1913, 1920 (Fed. Cir. 1989). Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of anticipation of claims 1-17 by the Hogan reference.

Independent claim 1 as originally filed was directed to a messaging system comprising at least one distributed front-end messaging system and a centralized data store associated with the at least one distributed front-end messaging system. The centralized data store includes means

for storing data associated with users of the at least one distributed front-end messaging system. The at least one distributed front-end messaging system further includes a respective at least one cache means for storing at least a portion of the centralized data associated with users of the at least one distributed front-end messaging system, such that at least one messaging function can be provided to users of the at least one distributed front-end messaging system in dependence on the data stored in the cache means.

Illustrative embodiments of the claimed arrangement provide a number of significant advantages over conventional messaging systems. See the specification at, for example, page 6, lines 8-11.

In formulating the §102(b) rejection of claim 1 as originally filed, the Examiner argues that the voice message server(s) 1302 and database 1304 in FIG. 13 of Hogan correspond to the respective distributed front-end messaging system(s) and centralized data store of claim 1. Applicants respectfully disagree. As disclosed in column 15, lines 20-33, elements 1302 and 1304 of FIG. 13 in Hogan are part of a voice message service 912. The voice message service 912 is itself part of a distributed voice messaging system. The distributed voice messaging system, as shown in FIG. 13, is specifically described at column 15, lines 21-25, as comprising a network control processor 304, an automated voice response unit 334, a DEF service 916, a front-end distributor 904, and voice messaging service 912. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the voice message server(s) 1302 and database 1304 in FIG. 13 of Hogan fail to teach or suggest the respective distributed front-end messaging system(s) and centralized data store of claim 1 as originally filed, and the rejection is traversed.

The §102(b) rejection of independent claim 14, and of dependent claims 2-13 and 15-17, is traversed on similar grounds.

Notwithstanding the traversal, Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 14 to clarify the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. More particularly, these claims have been amended to clarify that the distributed front-end messaging systems are remotely located from one another and from the centralized data store, and that the centralized data store is adapted for communication with the distributed front-end messaging systems over a network. See, for example, the illustrative embodiment of FIG. 3 and the associated text in the specification. Further, these claims have been amended to indicate that the distributed front-end

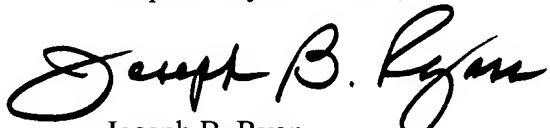
messaging systems store respective different portions of the centralized data, the respective different portions being associated with respective subsets of the users. Support can be found in the illustrative embodiments of FIGS. 3, 4 and 5, and in the corresponding text at, for example, page 10, lines 1-11, of the specification.

A broadening amendment has also been made to claim 1, to replace the term "cache means" with the more general "means for storing."

A new independent claim 18 has been added, directed to the centralized data store, and having a scope similar to that of amended claim 1 or amended claim 14. It is believed that no additional fee is due for this new claim.

In view of the above, Applicants believe that claims 1-18 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request the withdrawal of the §112 and §102(b) rejections.

Respectfully submitted,



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